

Bob Inzer

**CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT AND COUNTY COURTS
LEON COUNTY * TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA**

Attachment # 4
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Home of Florida's Capital

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July 8, 2004

Mr. Parwez Alam
County Administrator
Leon County
301 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Dear Parwez:

I appreciate the opportunity to meet with you regarding my space needs. I have reviewed the existing space occupied by the Tax Collector and Property Appraiser and believe this is the optimum location for a centralized court clerk function. As requested, I reviewed the space to determine the degree of renovation that would be required for me to occupy that space. Unfortunately, most of our needs are for open office space and most of this space is broken into private offices. We would be able to use the existing front counter space and lobby areas. Without a space architect, we are unable to determine exactly which walls could stay and which need to be removed, but believe that most of them would need to be removed.

I can assure you we would work with the County to minimize the financial requirements for renovating this space. We are not requesting new furniture and would not be requesting any modifications to the plumbing, security, or other special requirements. I understand that the County is limited in vacant space.

I think it important to provide some background on this issue. Soon after I was elected, I was advised that the County had budgeted \$1.5 million for renovating the Traffic Court annex building on Thomasville Road. As I evaluated this project, I realized that the County had budgeted nearly \$100 per foot to a 50-year-old building that was not worth saving. It had no room for expansion and was not well configured to serve customers. My recommendation was that the County apply these monies to a long-term solution instead to meet my needs and those of other county offices and not spend the money on a band aid solution.

One of my next observations was that the physical layout for the clerk's court functions was not well configured to provide good customer service nor was it designed to be efficient in the delivery of these services. We had eight intake windows on two floors on Thomasville Road and three floors in the courthouse. Citizens unfamiliar with the courthouse were run up and down the elevators and between here and Thomasville Road in order to make a court filing, obtain a copy of a record or get customer service.

Several of my court supervisors and directors and I visited clerks' offices of our size around the state. We specifically looked for a structure that would enhance both internal customers (judges, state's attorney, public defenders, etc.) and external customers (individual citizens, attorneys, etc.). We also were looking for operations that would enhance efficiency. Almost without exception, clerks' offices have more walk-in customer traffic than any other office in the courthouse and, therefore, are found on the ground floor of the courthouse. We also noticed that while management structures varied, their court functions were all co-located. This allowed for greater office coverage and cross-training of personnel.

For the past two years, I have been requesting space where we can put all of my court personnel. Effective July 1, the County was relieved of most of the funding responsibilities for the court functions with the principal exception of facilities. The court functions of my office will principally be funded from fees and charges. We will be submitting our budget to a conference where our efficiency will be compared with other clerks. Over time, limited resources will be distributed without regard to structural efficiency and we are not likely to get the resources we need. We believe that we could save between \$300,000 and \$400,000 per year in salaries with a more efficient structure.

I recognize that county resources are likewise limited. But during the time I have served as your Clerk, I have done my best to be a good steward of the taxpayers' monies both from seeking ways to minimize costs and enhance efficiency. Below is a schedule of the monies I have returned to the County since taking office.

Excess Funds Remitted to County by the Clerk's Office				
Projected for 2004	2003	2002	2001	TOTAL
\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,351,459	\$ 1,001,634	\$ 208,544	\$ 3,561,637

I proposed to the County a refinancing of certain county bonds that reduced the average interest rate on the bonds from 6.2% to 1.5% for a savings during the past three years of over \$2 million.

Sunshine State Bond Cost Savings				
	2004	2003	2002	TOTAL
Interest Savings.....	\$ 276,032	\$ 512,646	\$ 615,669	\$ 1,404,347

The Finance Department has not requested any new positions since I became the Clerk, and the most recent Interlocal Agreement freezes both the number of employees and operating expenses for the next three years at current levels. We

have sought internal efficiencies in the court divisions. We have eliminated one senior management position, two supervisory positions, and several deputy clerk positions. Unfortunately, current space configurations limit me from many other reorganization plans designed to enhance further efficiency.

During the space planning of the Bank of America, I was hopeful that we would be successful in implementing our reorganization plans. However, none of the current versions of the space plan provide any relief for the foreseeable future. The monies that were set aside and budgeted four years ago, if applied to the space needs, would meet my needs. Instead, it appears that the driving factor in making decisions is minimizing the costs today without regard to long-term costs/efficiencies or the needs of our citizens. I feel that this is the type of decision-making that got us where we are today.


In summary, I believe the County should move forward expeditiously to move the Tax Collector and Property Appraiser into the Bank of America Building and renovate this space for Clerk court-related functions, which would result in the following benefits:

- Greatly enhances customer service
- \$300,000 to \$400,000 savings annually to taxpayers
- Frees up valuable space on the second and third floors of the courthouse to meet immediate judicial needs
- Represents the type of good long-term planning our citizens expect
- Provides space to meet expected 10-year needs of the Clerk's Office
- Three- to four-year payback for initial investment

I have reviewed the other proposals under consideration and don't believe they measure up in benefits to the proposal I am suggesting.

I look forward to your support and hope that I have demonstrated my commitment to work as a partner with the County in meeting the needs of all our citizens.

Sincerely,



Bob Inzer
Clerk of the Circuit Court

cc: The Honorable Jane Sauls, Leon County Commissioner
The Honorable Tony Grippa, Leon County Commissioner
The Honorable Bill Proctor, Leon County Commissioner
The Honorable Bob Rackleff, Leon County Commissioner
The Honorable Rudy Maloy, Leon County Commissioner
The Honorable Dan Winchester, Leon County Commissioner
The Honorable Cliff Thael, Leon County Commissioner
The Honorable Charles Francis, Chief Judge, 2nd Judicial Circuit
Dean Leboeuf, Esq., Tallahassee Bar